

Section 5

Initial and Continuing Accreditation Reviewers

This section governs the *initial and continuing accreditation reviewers of institutions* in California.

A. Board of Institutional Reviewers

To conduct reviews for the *initial and continuing accreditation of institutions/program sponsors*, the Executive Director of the Commission maintains a pool of trained reviewers consisting of California college and university faculty members and administrators, elementary and secondary school teachers and other certificated professionals, and local school board members, pursuant to Education Code Section 44374(b). The pool consists of approximately 400 persons who are geographically and culturally diverse, and who represent gender equity. The Committee on Accreditation establishes criteria for membership in the pool. The Executive Director adds new members to the pool from time to time.

New Reviewers. For the most part, an accreditation team consists of experienced reviewers. A team need not include an inexperienced member, but new reviewers are appointed to *review activities* after their training, when appropriate.

Conflict of Interest. Care is exercised to avoid conflicts of interest involving accreditation team members and the institution/*sponsor* being reviewed. No member of a team shall have ties to the institution/*sponsor*, such as current or past enrollment there, programmatic collaboration, past or present employment, or spousal connections.

B. Team Structure, Size and Expertise.

1. **Initial Program Approval:** New programs may be reviewed by Commission staff members who have expertise in the credential area. If the Commission staff does not possess the necessary expertise, the program proposals may be reviewed by external experts selected by the Executive Director. *New programs are reviewed by one to two reviewers.*

- 2. Continuing Program Accreditation Review:** *For each program being considered for continuing accreditation, the Executive Director appoints a program review team. Programs may be reviewed in groups of like programs, (clusters) and cluster members are responsible for reviewing a group of credential programs from the same program sponsor. The team will prepare a report to the COA containing its findings on standards and accreditation recommendations. The size of clusters ranges from two to five members, depending on the number of programs being reviewed. Team members with appropriate experience and qualifications are responsible for professional judgments about credential programs. Reviewers assigned to a cluster should have sufficient expertise to make sound judgments about programs in the cluster.*
- 3. Continuing Institutional Accreditation:** *For an institution/sponsor being considered for continuing accreditation, the Executive Director appoints a site accreditation team and designates a team leader. The accreditation team members have responsibility for reviewing the Common Standards and either confirming or altering the findings from the program reviews. The size of the site review team ranges from three to seven members, depending on the enrollment, complexity of programs, and satellite locations. One to two members will have primary responsibility for the program findings. Additional members of the site accreditation team may be added by the COA as a result of its review of the sponsor's programs.*
- 4. Team Expertise.** The range of credential programs at an institution/sponsor must be reflected in the expertise of the reviewers, but there need not be a one-to-one correspondence between credential programs and reviewer specializations. *Student enrollments in programs, the complexity of programs, and/or the numbers of specialized programs offered by an institution will all be considered when both program and site teams are created¹. The nature of the preliminary findings will also be considered in establishing the site team.* At least one member of each institution's site team has a depth of expertise in the multicultural, diversity and language acquisition needs of California classrooms.

¹ Student enrollment is a factor because the team must complete a sufficient sample of interviews in order to make valid, reliable judgments about issues of quality. Complexity may be a factor if an institution

operates diverse programs, or if programs are offered at geographically dispersed locations or in colleges outside the education unit.

B. Organization and Expertise of *Continuing Accreditation Activities*

1. *Coordination and Communication between the Program Review and the Site Review Teams.* *Clear and timely communication from the program review teams to the Committee on Accreditation and from the Committee on Accreditation to the sponsor and site team is essential.*

2. *Team Leader.* The Executive Director appoints an experienced reviewer as the leader of a *sponsor's site* team for continuing accreditation. The leader's roles are to assist the Commission's staff consultant in planning the review, participate in team size and composition decisions, and provide leadership in team training, orientation and support during the accreditation review. The team leader and the Commission's staff consultant are jointly responsible for management of the review.

~~**2. *Cluster Leaders.*** The team leader and staff consultant select a member of each cluster to serve as cluster leader, whose role is to help in organizing and managing the cluster's activities during the review.~~

~~**3. *Site Review Team Common Standards Cluster.*** The Common Standards are reviewed by a team of reviewers, including members who are able to make judgments about the education unit. This cluster may include *among others*, a dean, associate dean, university unit director (when a smaller institution has a department rather than a school of education) and/or a superintendent of a school district or county office of education.~~

~~**4. *Team Assignments.*** Team members are trained in reviewing the Common Standards and/or the selected Program Standards. A single cluster of reviewers is not normally given primary responsibility for reviewing the Common Standards and Program Standards in the same review.~~

- ~~5. **Team Continuity.** When possible and when appropriate to the programs at one or more institutions to be visited, members of previously successful teams are kept together for the purpose of reviewing more than one institution.~~

C. Training and Orientation for Accreditation Reviews

Prior to participation in an accreditation review *activities*, team members, cluster leaders and team leaders participate in two kinds of in-depth training and orientation.

1. **BIR Team Training.** To ensure that accreditation reviews examine issues of quality in preparation, team members participate in an intensive ~~three-day~~ training program, which focuses on *document review, data analysis, team skills, interview techniques, accreditation procedures, and the consistent application of standards.* In adopting an *Accreditation Handbook*, the Committee on Accreditation will attend to appropriate differentiation in the training of new and returning team members, cluster leaders and team leaders *and training for the three different types of review activities: Initial Program Approval, Continuing Program Review, and Continuing Institutional Accreditation Review.* The Board of Institutional Reviewers will have members involved in all three types of review activities.

2. Team Orientation.

Initial Program Approval: As new program standards are adopted, and documents are then submitted, a Commission staff member will be assigned to the program. The staff member will ensure calibration of reader responses to the standards and work with all reviewers to ensure that all programs documents submitted for initial program approval are reviewed in an equitable manner.

Continuing Program Review: Updates will be provided to BIR members regarding program review on a regular basis. Program Reviewers may meet regionally to review program documents. At such a meeting, a Commission staff consultant will be present.

Continuing Institutional Accreditation Review: On the day prior to the beginning of an accreditation site visit, team members meet to discuss their observations about the institutional self-study report, the *preliminary program standard findings*, review their

prior training as team members, and thoroughly plan the team activities for the accreditation review under the team leader ~~and cluster leaders~~.

3. ***Evaluation of Training and Accreditation Activities.*** *To ensure that future team trainings and orientations are effective, all team members will be asked to evaluate both training and orientation activities. The Committee on Accreditation will analyze the responses and modify the trainings appropriately.*